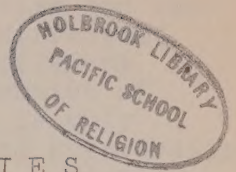


DEC 28 '55

C H U R C H N E W S



F R O M T H E N O R T H E R N C O U N T R I E S

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No. 8

August 4th, 1955.

Billy Graham on Short Tour of Scandinavia.

The world famous revivalist Billy Graham has made short visits to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark in July. He spoke at three meetings at Oslo, Gothenburg (Göteborg), and Aarhus, and in all three countries aroused great interest. The attendance at the meeting in Oslo was the largest, 36-37.000 being assembled in Ullevål Stadium, while about 20.000 who could not get inside listened to loudspeakers outside. The attendance in Gothenburg (Göteborg) was about 18.000, while only about 8.200 people had assembled in the stadium at Aarhus which holds about 25.000.

In Norway Bishop Eivind Berggrav stated his attitude to the excitement aroused by Billy Graham's approaching visit in his journal Kirke og Kultur ("Church and Culture"). The Bishop here points out the dangers involved in the sensationalism surrounding Graham's meetings, and he is not sure that the methods - which apart from the greater emphasis on preparing and following up the meetings are identical with those used in 1880 - are the right ones for our day with its totally different spiritual situation. But none of us has the right to criticize Graham without personally employing more up-to-date methods of evangelization. The Bishop continues: "If Graham can activate the church and speed up its work of evangelization we must be willing to pay the price and be willing to let ourselves be instructed by him even though we may not relish it." The present Bishop of the diocese of Oslo Dr. Johs. Smemo has expressed his satisfaction and gratitude at Billy Graham's visit and his inspiring words.

In the Danish papers there has been a lively debate on Graham's doctrine and methods before his arrival. 18 pastors of the Danish National Church in Aarhus issued a joint statement expressing their disapproval, not because they wished to deny his being a Christian, but because they think there is a



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fundamental difference between his conception of baptism and that of the National Lutheran Church, and consequently a different view of God's way of redeeming man, and likewise a different conception of what constitutes the Church and the communion of saints. Hence, the statement continues, cooperation is only made possible by conscious or even perhaps prearranged suppression of the significance of baptism, and this is dishonest. Finally, they called the publicity which appears to be indissolubly connected with the mass meetings an affront to the realm of the spirit. In many other quarters - thus in a leading article in "Kristeligt Dagblad" ("Christian Daily") - the view was maintained that though it was easy to criticize Billy Graham, it was inadmissible to repudiate him, on the contrary one ought to pray for his meetings and make a real contribution towards making them helpful to searching and asking people.

Meeting of Northern Deaconess Institutions at Hardanger.

350-400 deaconesses and leaders of deaconess work in the Northern countries recently assembled for a meeting at Hardanger (Norway). Since the end of the war such meetings have been held regularly every other year in each of the Northern countries in turn. The primary aim of these meetings is not the discussion of organizational or economic problems, but the study of the significance of deaconess work and the strengthening of personal Christianity. This year the special topics were "The Church's Call to Serve and Witness", "Relations between the Sisters", and "Personal Renewal".

The leader of Bergen's Deaconess House Rev. Olaus Barkve stated in connection with the meeting that though the deaconess work in the Northern countries follows much the same pattern there is no question of uniformity, and he finds that a meeting of this kind gives a refreshingly varied impression of deaconess work. To exemplify this he points out that Denmark is the most conservative as to outward form, having preserved the "mother house" in accordance with Flidner's original practice, and requiring that the sisters should always wear their uniform. In the three other countries the sisters themselves apply for their positions and they are free to wear ordinary clothes when not working, if they so desire.

Northern Meeting for Youth Leaders.

Youth leaders in National Church (Lutheran) organizations in the Northern countries will assemble for a meeting at Viborg (Denmark) August 16-22. The meeting will be presided over by the Bishop of the diocese of Viborg, Christian Baun, and beside a number of instructive and devotional talks by well-known churchmen from the Scandinavian countries there will be informative talks on the current situation of the church in each country and on new forms of church activity. In connection with the meeting a public meeting will be held in Viborg Cathedral at which Bishop Baun and Bishop Elis Gulin, Tampere (Tammerfors), Finland, will speak.

Cooperation between the Associations of Clergy in the Northern Countries.

The Associations of Clergy in the National Churches of

Denmark, Finland (one Finnish and one Swedish speaking), Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have held their first leaders' conference from July 25th - 28th in Sigtuna, Sweden. The conference decided to accept the invitation conveyed by the president of the Icelandic Association of Clergy Pastor Jakob Jonsson, Reykjavik, to arrange the next general conference for ministers from the five Northern countries on Iceland in connection with the 900-years' jubilee of the Church of Iceland on July 1st, 1956. It was also decided to organize a permanent joint Committee of the Associations of Clergy.

DENMARK

New Difficulties in South Schleswig?

The new rule concerning the use of the Danish language at services and church functions in the German parish churches in Schleswig-Holstein, which was passed at the synod of the German church in Schleswig-Holstein held at Rendsburg (C.N. No. 7), has been eagerly discussed in Danish church circles although no official decision has been published as yet. In a statement to the Christian Press Bureau in København (Copenhagen) the president of the organization "Dansk Kirke i Udlandet" ("The Danish Church in Foreign Countries"), which supports Danish church work in South Schleswig, Bishop C.W. Noack, Haderslev, characterizes the new Act as a step in the right direction. But at the same time he emphasizes that the real value of the rule will largely depend on its administration. If applied reluctantly it will be worse than nothing, the Bishop believes. Among other things he feels that there ought to be a rule giving members of the Danish independent congregations who have withdrawn from the German National Church the right to use the parish churches, especially as the German independent congregations in North Schleswig are allowed to use the Danish parish churches. (Independent congregations are a special Danish phenomenon that do not differ from the congregations of the National Church as to doctrine, but only as to organization.)

In an article on this question the Danish "Kristeligt Dagblad" ("Christian Daily") states that a number of Danish pastors have some misgivings at agreeing to the regulations of the new Act, because it lays down that a Danish pastor may only use the German churches if he submits to the regulations of the National Church which enforces a much stricter discipline than is usual in the Danish Church: children whose parents are not members of the National Church may not be baptized, confirmation is a necessary condition for church marriage, and only members of the National Church can have a church burial. To some of the pastors church discipline of this kind means a restriction in the free proclamation of the Gospel, and they are considering leaving their work in South Schleswig if they are required to enforce the same church discipline as their German colleagues.

Plan for Building 18 New Churches in Copenhagen's Suburbs in the Next 10 Years.

A large commission appointed by the Ministry for Church Affairs and consisting of representatives for the Lutheran National Church and the large political parties has been working for two years on the problem of new churches, especially in the suburbs of Copenhagen. The commission has now unanimously suggested several important changes in the rules regarding the erection of new churches.

Whereas it has hitherto been required that every new church should be free of debt when dedicated, the commission now agrees that up to half of that part of the cost which is not covered by grants from public funds may be taken up as a loan, the interest and amortization on which are to be paid by the church tax. This rule will make it far easier to build churches in the large new suburbs that have grown up around Copenhagen in late years and where it is far from easy to raise the large sum needed to build a new church.

The commission further recommends that the old rule preventing the State from contributing funds for the building of churches in Copenhagen should be abolished so that the rules will be the same for all Denmark. It is suggested that the former practice that the State supplies up to half the cost of a new church building, be preserved and that it should be considered whether such aid should not also apply to certain parish rooms in connection with the church as well as to the church itself.

The commission has thoroughly investigated the need for new churches in Copenhagen as well as in the provinces, and it has been agreed that a number of new churches must be built in the next 10 years. As a result of the comprehensive statistical material collected in the course of the investigation a list of more than 18 new churches that are to be completed within this period has been compiled.

Danish Mission Hospital in Nebk Re-opens.

As mentioned in C.N. No. 6 the Danish Mission to the Near East has felt itself compelled to send an appeal to the Syrian Government threatening to close the Danish Mission Hospital in Nebk if certain rights were not recognized by the Government as belonging to the hospital. The Syrian Government has now granted the hospital the right to employ a Danish staff of the desired size, to appoint a Danish leader (who will however only be granted recognition for one year at a time), and to carry on its training school for nurses.

The hospital will now open as usual on August 15th after the vacation.

The Mission Covenant Opens Bible School for Young People.

At its annual meeting the Dansk Missionsforbund (Danish Mission Covenant) resolved to establish a Bible school for young people similar to the many other types of youth schools in Denmark. It is to open in the autumn of 1956, and there is to be a five months course for young men and a similar course for young women.

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FINLAND

The Finnish Missionary Society Now Has 90 Missionaries Abroad.

Last year the Missionary Society of the Lutheran National Church in Finland had 90 missionaries working in various mission fields, mostly in Africa. The most important event last year was undoubtedly the visit of Bishop Martti Simojoki and the chairman of the Society Rev. Tuure Vapaavouri to the mission fields in Africa. During the visit a church assembly was held at which it was decided to form the Ambokavango Church. The name is an abbreviation of the names of the Ambo district and Okavango, the two districts where the Finnish Missionary Society has been working for many years. The number of church members in the Ambo district is at present 83,470. Last year 1842 pagans were baptized and 2485 children of Christian parents. 400 teachers are working in the Sunday schools, the number of pupils is more than 13,000. There are 300 Bible study groups with 12,000 members, 58 youth clubs, and about 4000 children have attended preparation classes before their confirmation. In Okavango the number of church members is 2719.

Besides the work in the Ambokavango church the Finnish Missionary Society also has missionaries in Tanganyika, mainly in the Konde district. Two missionaries are working in Hong Kong, and there are five missionaries in Jerusalem where they run a kindergarten, a children's home, and a Hebrew school.

Courses for Parish Officers.

Both the Finnish and the Swedish federations of congregations in Finland are making an effort to train their parish officers, such as the members of church administration committees and church boards in their work. About 20 courses have been held in the early summer with this purpose in view. The courses include lectures on the duties of church boards, on the regulations of church legislation, etc.

Church Erects Large Hostel for the Homeless.

There are still a good many homeless people in Helsinki (Helsingfors) and now the Finnish Church, or more specifically the night missionary Arvid von Martens from the Helsinki Congregations' Welfare Centre has decided to build a hostel with beds for 140 men. In winter when the need for such a hostel is especially great it has so far been possible to lodge the men in various public buildings, but as this is no longer possible it has been decided to build a special hostel for the homeless. The estimated cost of the building is 17 million Finnish marks towards which the town of Helsinki is willing to contribute 5 million marks as a loan; the rest of the money is to be raised by the National Church and the Free Churches.

The British Government's Policy for the Near East

When the British Government declared its policy for the Near East in 1918, it was in a position to do so with a certain amount of confidence. The war had been going on for three years, and the British Empire was at its height. The British Government had a large and powerful army, and it was in a position to enforce its policy in the Near East. The British Government's policy for the Near East was based on the principle of self-determination. It was the policy of the British Government to support the peoples of the Near East in their struggle for independence. The British Government was in a position to do so because it had a large and powerful army, and it was in a position to enforce its policy in the Near East. The British Government's policy for the Near East was based on the principle of self-determination. It was the policy of the British Government to support the peoples of the Near East in their struggle for independence. The British Government was in a position to do so because it had a large and powerful army, and it was in a position to enforce its policy in the Near East.

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Moral and Religious Demands in Politics.

The fact that criticism of a moral and religious nature have been directed against two of the presidential candidates in the coming election in Finland early in 1955 has given rise to a discussion in the church press as to whether moral and religious demands are applicable to politics.

In the Church paper "Kotimaa" Professor Yrjö Alanen - the leader of the Christian Social Democrats - writes that it may justifiably be demanded that the man who is to be president should lead an irreproachable life.

Professor Alanen writes: "Ability, talents, and experience must of course always be taken into consideration, but it is also important that persons in responsible public office should be personally irreproachable so that no serious objection can be raised to their morals. The man who seeks an outstanding public office, or accepts it when offered, should remember that even his private life will be before the eyes of the public. This is especially true of positions in the Church. But the State too must be held in such high respect that the holders of its most important offices must be irreproachable and their private lives must also be worthy of public respect."

Professor Alanen continues that in his opinion party lines should not play as great a part in the election of presidential candidates as their qualifications including personal character.

The Fenno-Swedish church paper "Församlingsbladet" adds that church members naturally attach importance not only to personal moral qualities, but also to church membership. In these circles it is extremely difficult to mobilize any enthusiasm for a candidate who has withdrawn from the fellowship of the Church.

Sunday School Teachers Warn Against Divorce.

Finland's Sunday School teachers, who play an important part in the Finnish Church, have issued a public warning against the unhappy results the large number of divorces have for the children. The statement was issued from the annual Sunday School meeting at Kajana where more than 1000 people were assembled, representing 23,000 Sunday School teachers, who teach 250,000 children. One part of the statement reads:

"We know by experience how deeply the child's soul is injured when a home is dissolved in this way. We therefore earnestly appeal to the children's parents to do their utmost to find a solution of their marriage difficulties. It is fatal for our children to begin their lives on the ruins of their own homes."

NORWAY

One Million Norwegians Listen to Radio Church Services.

The Norwegian radio has published a booklet with the results of a survey of listeners' habits carried out by the Norwegian Gallup Institute. From this it appears that the religious broadcasts are followed by an amazingly large audience.

Apart from the news and the weather reports there is no programme that dominates the Sunday so much as the church service.

79 o/o of the listeners have the opportunity of hearing it, and 59 o/o of them make use of this opportunity according to the survey. That is to say 42 o/o of all wireless listeners in the country. The selection percentage, i.e. those who have decided beforehand that they want to hear precisely this programme, is very high: 55 o/o.

These percentages correspond roughly to 920,000 listeners, or to round off the figure, about 1 million people often listen to the church services on the wireless.

The morning prayer services also gather a very large circle of listeners, 57 o/o of those who have the opportunity of listening; the selection percentage is 56.

The Free Churches Want More Time on the Wireless.

Rev. Chr. Svendsen, one of the leaders of the Norwegian Free Churches has written an article in the daily paper "Vårt Land" ("Our Country") that the Free Churches be given more time on the Norwegian wireless programmes. He feels that as the Free Churches comprise some 100,000 members it is unfair that the six larger denominations should only be allowed one afternoon service each a year, whereas the National Church has all the Sunday morning services. The Free Churches also have 36 of the 300 morning prayer services on week-days.

In comparison he mentions conditions in Denmark where the Evangelical Free Churches only have 30,000 members and yet each denomination has two afternoon services a year, though practically none of the morning prayer services. In Sweden where the number of Free Church members is about 400,000 the National Church has about 3/4 of the morning and 1/4 of the afternoon church services, while the Free Churches share the rest. The morning prayer services on week-days are equally divided between the National Church and the Free Churches. Rev. Chr. Svendsen finally appeals to the leaders of the National Church and to the directors of the wireless to consider whether the time has not come for a more Christian and a more democratic division of the religious programmes on the wireless.

More and More Pastors at Norwegian Hospitals.

Great efforts are being made in Norway to improve the ministry to the hospitals. Great interest in this attempt has been shown by the hospitals as well as the churches, and many doctors desire an extended system with special hospital chaplains



who can devote themselves fully to this work and become a part of the hospital staff like the other hospital workers. In this way it should also be possible to establish a better cooperation between the doctors and chaplains than is possible when the pastor has to serve the hospital while attending to his regular parish duties.

One by one no less than eight hospitals in Oslo have got their own regular chaplains and a number of hospitals in the provinces have also appointed their own chaplains.

At the instigation of the Norwegian bishops a committee has been appointed by the Ministry for Church and Education to investigate the whole matter.

Louder Protests against the Slave Trade Increasing.

In view of the dreadful new reports on the slave trade in our own day that have been appearing in the press of late, the Norwegian Christian daily in Bergen "Dagen" ("The Day") writes: "It sounds too fantastic to believe, but the whole world knows it to be true. The Great Powers know it, the British and the French are acquainted with this stain on their colonial governments, the UN also knows about it. But nothing happens. The political chess game paralyzes the ability to act in those who ought to be the first to maintain the principles of the human rights. But the highway-men are allowed to carry on their scandalous traffic in human beings practically undisturbed.

Missionaries from several countries have done a good deed in acquainting the world with these disgraceful conditions. They cry out as far as their voices will reach that this is a shame and a disgrace that modern states should be ashamed to countenance. So far they have been voices crying in the desert. They have received no answer to their earnest appeal that someone should intervene.

The cry must become louder. And Norway can add her voice. And if the Government and the Parliament and the Nobel Committee for Peace, and other appropriate authorities refuse to take up the matter our missionary societies must join forces and let their voices be heard, if necessary all the way to the UN."

SWEDEN

The Importance of the Swedish National Church in the Community.

In the last few months one of Sweden's largest newspapers "Svenska Dagbladet" ("Swedish Daily") has published a number of articles on the situation of the National Church today, and a leading article rounded off the series by summing up and commenting on the views that have been put forth.

The paper characterizes the Lutheran National Church - as well as the Free Churches - as one of the main factors in Swedish cultural life and lists a number of social and ethical

spheres in which the Church's influence is of decisive importance. The Church has great internal strength and plays a far more important part than the uninitiated imagine.

Weaknesses of the National Church are claimed to be too little contact with important groups of society and with various common social problems, too little inspiration and enterprise in the methods it employs in working with modern people, the undefined position of the layman in church work, too weak a sense of the problems facing women in modern society, and finally that the dissension between the various Church movements diverts the power of the Church from its true tasks.

But on the other hand "Svenska Dagbladet" believes it possible to ascertain a consolidation on the internal front, a new objective approach and intensive efforts to create a better contact with the community. Several concrete examples of this are cited, but as something more important than the individual examples it mentions the new desire to take action against the difficulties of the situation.

Socialist on the "naive atheism" of the Labour Movement.

The Swedish Labour Movement is characterized by a touchingly naive atheism, says an article on the relation of the Labour Movement to Christianity written by the Swedish writer Eskil Bergen, who has been known as a radical socialist. He speaks ironically of the facile way in which many people think they have solved all the mysteries of the world if only they accept that the materialists from the close of the last century wrote and said.

At the same time that large circles in the Labour Movement repudiate religion, they wish to reawaken the spirit of idealism from the turn of the century, the unselfish sacrifices for the cause of the organization, says Eskil Bergen. But they do not realize that this idealism and self-sacrifice are nothing but a faint reflection of the abolished Christian metaphysics. The reflected glow was strong enough to make people think it shone by its own light and would last from one generation to the next. But it did not turn out as they expected. The spiritual larder is empty when even the last remnants - the welfare state and the Socialist programme - have lost their attraction.

Idealism is not possible in juxtaposition or in opposition to metaphysics except for a short historical period, a century or so. After that utilitarianism appears, and in it we recognize the old devil from the despised metaphysical dogmatics, merely deprived of his traditional costume and diluted to indifference to and loathing of the good, to bottomless pessimism, to superficial knowledge, to egocentricity - in a word: to empty nothingness. The Swedish welfare state is to a steadily increasing degree manifesting itself under the banner of utilitarianism.

No Federation of Swedish Free Churches for Some Time to Come.

Many people had expected that it would be possible to establish a federation of the Swedish Free Churches in the present year to consolidate the cooperation which has so far been carried on by the Joint Committee of the Free Churches. But it can now be stated with certainty that this will be impossible, as several of the denominations have rejected the idea.

The old denominations, such as the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (Svenska Missionsförbundet), definitely supported the idea of such a federation, but the Covenant of Sanctification (Helgelseförbundet) openly opposed it, and two other denominations, the Örebro Mission and the Alliance Mission, have postponed the matter for the time being. Because of this the old denominations do not wish to proceed in the matter as it might weaken the already existing cooperation, but they of course hope it will be possible within a reasonable period of time to realize the plan with the support of all eight denominations represented in the Joint Committee.

Christian Element in International Exhibition.

At the large international exhibition at Hålsingborg this summer one finds a special Christian element. Every Thursday an interdenominational meeting with talks and hymns is held at a central spot. The first of the series was held in connection with the Swedish Methodists' annual conference at Hålsingborg and here the Methodist Bishop of the Northern countries Rt. Rev. Dr. Odd Hagen spoke.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the Örebro Mission opened a special mission exhibition at the fair at Örebro. The exhibition was visited by a large number of people and awakened a good deal of interest.

Notes.

The first woman pastor in the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden has passed her examination at the Mission School at Lidingö.

At its annual conference the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden recently resolved to guarantee a certain minimum salary to all its pastors.

The Free Church Study League in Sweden has decided to establish a Free Church film and picture bureau.

